

ESTONIA

Diversify the rural economy

Location

Rutja küla

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 3 – Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

Measure

M312 - Support for business creation and development

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 151 995

EAFRD 67 499

National/Regional 22 500

Private 61 996

Project duration

2008 – 2010

Project promoter

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A year-round holiday cottage was built on an equestrian farm to accommodate guests. The construction used natural materials such as moss and wood.

Summary

An Estonian equestrian farm family wanted a cottage to accommodate guests all year round. They also wanted heated rooms to host children's activities, private events, crafts and catering. The region lacked such venues, particularly for the winter. They wanted to use natural materials and provide a unique experience.

The family used EAFRD funding to plan and construct the year-round holiday cottage including help from consultants. They installed a ground source heating system and a sauna in the cottage. They can also offer catering.



Results

Construction of a year-round holiday cottage to accommodate guests to the equestrian farm including a sauna and large fireplace.

Installation of a ground source heating system.

The cottage also hosts events, parties and children's activities.

Lessons & Recommendations

- Unexpected difficulties are likely such as changing prices and operators.
- Hire good consultants in fields in which you are not so competent.
- Payment decisions might really take the maximum time allowed.



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Context

Before construction of the new cottage, the farm had 3 summerhouses for use only during the summer. The region lacked similar venues for smaller groups and private events. The equestrian farm activities including therapy for people with special needs were mainly in summer. Some special events were organised in winter lasting a few hours. The farm needed comfortable accommodation for the whole year and warm rooms in which to organize children's programmes, crafts and catering. The farm's previous activities were purely seasonal, and done as a hobby, with the main income from other sources.

Objectives

The project's objective was to offer accommodation and catering so guests could stay on after horse therapy sessions. The cottage aimed to be comfortable for people with special needs. The aim was to create a very natural and authentic cottage.

Activities

They started preparatory work and planning in 2004 (building permits, approvals, business plan – it took four years prior to the submission of the application).

A consultant helped with the business plan, while an architect planned the house. A construction inspection helped to communicate the ideas to the builders. They wanted an authentic log house, built from natural materials with moss used for insulation.

The group submitted the application to the paying agency in 2008. The application was approved in 2009 and construction work started afterwards.

The cottage was finished by the end of 2009 and the first guests came.

A ground source heat pump was installed for the heating system in 2010 (with Leader support).

Main Results

The family can now provide accommodation and catering for guests all year round and all weather conditions (making it a tourist attraction in cold periods with snow).

The guests praise the cottage for being cosy, natural and comfortable. The house is unique and that is important so it is remembered by guests.

Simple things are important to our guests such as the sauna heated with wood, rooms with alder planks giving the rooms the scent of wood, the old water tub and a large fireplace. People with allergies are very satisfied the cottage is so natural, with no chemicals used.

Both family members can now work full time at the Arma Equestrian Farm, while a chef is employed during the summer season.

The guests enjoy elements of life in the countryside such as birdsong, silence, stroking the horses and watching the chickens.



Key lessons

Preparatory work is crucial but unexpected difficulties are likely (project timelines can be long, prices change, some providers may stop operating). Construction activities might not go as planned (a dug well did not provide enough water and they had to quickly build a drilled well).

Hire good consultants in fields in which you are not so competent.

The economic situation can change (construction activities started during the recession so they could choose higher quality products and at a better price, but at the same time it was very difficult to get a loan from the bank).

Payment decisions might really take the maximum time allowed.

Additional sources of information

www.facebook.com/Arma-Ratsatalu-130874893592145/?fref=ts